

LEADER-POST

Students use photos to tell stories

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If a picture is truly worth a thousand words, some North Central youth are hoping their photographs will tell stories that many people have never heard about the community.

The North Central Photojournalism Project: Just Us provided a unique opportunity for some Scott Collegiate students to capture their neighbourhood on film in the way they see it. On Thursday, an exhibit of their finished work opened at the T.C. Douglas Building.

The project was the brainchild of photojournalist Mark Taylor, who developed the idea of offering a photography class for youth in the neighbourhood while he was working for the North Central Community Association.

After Maclean's magazine labelled North Central "Canada's worst neighbourhood," plenty of media attention was focused on depicting life in the community, which Taylor felt the local youth could do for themselves.

"Instead of someone else telling their stories, have them tell their own stories. I just wanted to see how they saw their neighbourhood," said Taylor.

After securing an ArtsSmarts grant through the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the project was offered to Scott students through the Art 20 course for two semesters. With the grant covering film, disposable cameras, processing, frames and matting, the students were able to focus solely on taking pictures.

Every Monday, Taylor would meet with the students, look at their photos from the previous week, hand out cameras and give them a small assignment. While the course didn't focus on the more technical aspects of photography and camera operation, Taylor did provide some brief instruction on composition and lighting.

"Mostly I just said, 'Go out and take pictures of people. Take pictures of your friends, your family, in their house or where they live and just slice of life.' Being a photojournalist, I wanted pictures of people versus pictures of dogs and landscapes and stuff," explained Taylor.

"Take pictures that tell a story. Instead of just willy-nilly taking snapshots, think about it a little bit and think about what you're putting in that frame."

Eighteen-year-old Joshua Steeves -- who has three photos on display -- took part in the program both semesters. He called the project an awesome opportunity to capture the North Central he lives in, including not just his loved ones but everyday moments in the community, such as people cleaning up the neighbourhood.

"It gives people a view, a chance to see how North Central is," explained Steeves.

Taylor admitted the students' work exceeded his expectations.

"Pretty much every roll that came in, there was at least one or two shots that I was like, 'I wish I had taken that.' I think all these shots could be in a newspaper or magazine easily," he said.

Every student who took part in the class had at least one photo published in the North Central Community Connection, a neighbourhood newspaper, which gave Steeves a thrill.

"I even had thoughts like, 'I wonder how it would be if I had a job with the Prairie Dog newspaper?' I just want to see my pictures more often in the newspaper," said Steeves, adding that while he wants to pursue a career in music, he will continue with photojournalism in his free time.